



A History of Inspection & Maintenance Programs in California

JUNE 2003

- 1963** California requires crankcase devices on new vehicles and older vehicles to be retrofitted.
- 1966** California applies exhaust emission standards to new vehicles.
- 1967** The first federal Clean Air Act passes. It lets the state establish air quality standards. The Act was updated in 1970.
- 1969** California Highway Patrol (CHP) begins roadside inspections, checking emission control systems.
- 1972** CHP begins collecting emissions data from vehicles during roadside inspections.
- 1973** A state law passes, authorizing a pilot loaded-mode inspection program in Riverside.
- 1974** CHP begins issuing "Notices of Correction" to operators of vehicles exceeding pollution standards.
- 1975-78** Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair (DCA/BAR) conducts approximately 100,000 loaded-mode tests in Riverside to gather inspection and repair data for a future program.
- 1977** Amendments to the federal Clean Air Act require states to comply with federal emission standards, prompting California to create a vehicle inspection program.
- 1979** BAR administers a contractor-run, change-of-ownership inspection network in the South Coast Air Basin. The contractor performs several million loaded-mode tests before the contract ends in 1984.
- 1982** The California Legislature passes a law creating the state's first statewide Smog Check program. It is signed by Governor Jerry Brown.
- 1984** California's first biennial (every other year) inspection program begins. Vehicles in most areas cannot be registered without passing a Smog Check inspection once every two years. DCA/BAR oversees the program.
- 1990** Responding to amendments to the federal Clean Air Act, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) calls for enhanced emissions testing. It orders the elimination of private station vehicle inspections. The USEPA proposes, in addressing a potential conflict of interest among stations that both test and repair vehicles, that every California vehicle owner obtain a Smog Check inspection at a "test only" center either run or contracted by the state. Federal officials threaten to withhold \$500 million in federal highway funds if the state does not comply.
- 1993** Governor Pete Wilson and the California Legislature enter into lengthy negotiations with the USEPA in an attempt to preserve motorist convenience and private sector investment in the Smog Check program.

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SMOG CHECK PROGRAM FACT SHEET:
A HISTORY OF INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE
PROGRAMS IN CALIFORNIA

(Continued)

- 1994** An alternative plan, devised by a bipartisan legislative majority and signed into law by Governor Pete Wilson, enhances the existing Smog Check program. The plan focuses on identifying and repairing "Gross Polluters," those vehicles that dramatically exceed federal and state emissions regulations and are responsible for roughly half of California's vehicular smog. The plan is designed to achieve a reduction in vehicle emissions that will meet federal standards without unduly inconveniencing motorists. At least 15 percent of vehicles in Enhanced Areas, California's smoggiest regions, will be inspected at authorized Test-Only stations. The overwhelming majority of vehicle owners will continue obtaining emissions tests at traditional testing sites.
- 1996** Smog Check stations around California install and begin to use new Electronic Transmission (ET) computer technology to enable DCA/BAR to identify Gross Polluters, while helping to prevent the fraudulent issuance of smog certificates to vehicles that actually fail. With ET, "on-line" Smog Checks are conducted while linked by computer to DCA/BAR. At the conclusion of a passing emissions test, an electronic smog certificate is immediately transmitted to the Department of Motor Vehicles.
- 1998** Stations in Enhanced Areas are required to perform, on most vehicles, Acceleration Simulation Mode (ASM) tests using dynamometer equipment, a treadmill-like device that simulates driving conditions. This new equipment tests vehicles for hydrocarbons (HC), carbon monoxide (CO), and for the first time ever, oxides of nitrogen (NOx), a major smog-forming pollutant. A small number of vehicles with full-time, four-wheel drive, all-wheel drive, and traction control are not able to be tested on the dynamometer. These vehicles continue to be tested in the two-speed idle mode. A gas cap pressure test is also part of the process. The amount of money that must be spent on repairs by vehicle owners to qualify for a two-year Repair Cost Waiver is increased to \$450 in all areas of the state.
- An Economic Hardship Extension also becomes available for low-income motorists. The limit to qualify for the two-year Extension is \$250.
- 2000** Governor Gray Davis authorizes DCA/BAR to implement the Consumer Assistance Program (CAP). Eligible motorists are able to receive up to \$500 to fix their vehicle or \$1,000 to retire it.
- 2002** The Consumer Assistance Program provides repair assistance for more than 26,000 vehicles, resulting in an estimated reduction of 3,000 tons per year of air pollutants. Over 33,000 vehicles are retired, but this program is suspended in 2002 due to budget constraints. The Consumer Assistance Program continues to offer repair assistance.